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ABSTRACT

In this address by the Chancellor of the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD), an overview is provided of major accomplishments, influences, changes, and directions of the District. Following introductory comments, the paper highlights some of the recent accomplishments of LACCD colleges, including the Test Construction and Evaluation System at Los Angeles Pierce College; the language laboratory at West Los Angeles College; the initiation of honors programs on several campuses; Project ASSET, a systematic program of assessment, orientation, and course placement; and cooperative programs with business and industry. The paper continues with a discussion of a period of unprecedented turmoil confronting the district, which focuses on the new realities of community college life; i.e., a restricted mission, reduced funding, and reduced numbers of students. Next, the paper emphasizes the ways community colleges must change to adapt to social changes, such as the renewed emphasis on competition and the revival of the work ethic. The final portion of the paper focuses on the critical nature of the issue of the professionalism of community college faculty and the responsibility of the faculty to mold the curriculum, provide mentorship to attract and hold students, and automate courses and learning materials to bring about the emergence of "the new college." (LAL)

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LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

1984-85 STATE OF THE DISTRICT ADDRESS

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CHANCELLOR LESLIE KOLTAI

MARCH 1, 1985

1984 - 85
STATE OF THE DISTRICT ADDRESS

When the flexible calendar committee began to organize the activities for this third and final day of academic renewal, they solicited my advice as to the content of the program. I could think of no better group to serve as the centerpiece of our program than the Commission for the Advancement of Teaching. As you may know, the District has been concerned about the professional growth issue for some time. I'm proud to say that we started working on it when others weren't interested, and as a consequence of our efforts, are now ready to provide leadership in the state on the issue.

I felt that the Academic Renewal Days were the appropriate time to showcase our efforts and bring them to the attention of the entire District and the community at large. The Commission has done an outstanding job, and I commend them for it. You have been a diligent, thoughtful, forward looking group, and I know that your work is having a substantial impact here in the District, and I might add, throughout the state as well.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Harry Handler, President Art Bronson, and the presenters in the morning session. It was an excellent discussion of important issues. And so to all of you who are here, community members, trustees, administrators, faculty members, classified staff, and students, I extend my thanks for your participation today.

This group, I believe, is engaged in one of the most important endeavors a profession can engage in—that is, the discussion of its professionalism and its commitment to professional growth and renewal.

EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

In times such as these it is vital that we go back to the fundamentals of what we do and how we do it. Let me say plainly and without equivocation that what we do is teach students, and how we do it is with excellence. It is important that we not forget this. We will talk about our problems in a moment, but we should not let our problems obscure the many good things that we have accomplished.

For example, the Test Construction and Evaluation System at Los Angeles Pierce College provides faculty with tremendous assistance in constructing and scoring more effective examinations, as well as recording grades and other relevant information.

It permits updates and evaluations of objective examinations by drawing from a large bank of instructor-developed questions—and was created by a member of our own faculty, Dr. William Duxler, professor of physics at Pierce.

The language laboratory at West Los Angeles College utilizes microcomputers, audio and video cassettes, as well as extensive tutorial assistance, in a format that signals a new era in foreign language instruction. Developed by Dr. Marc Mancini, head of the Language Arts department at West, the lab is one of only a handful in the country to offer both video and audio language instruction assistance.

The past year has also seen initiation of honors programs on some of our campuses, designed to present an academically enriched core of classes to challenge the superior student.

We have strengthened the curriculum review process through establishment of a District-wide Curriculum Planning and Development Committee, which has brought the leadership of both the Academic Senate and the AFT together with college and District staff in efforts to insure the quality of our academic offerings.

The broadly-based Committee on Access and Excellence did an outstanding job of identifying major planning issues in its "White Paper," which has served as the basis for continued discussion district-wide.

And colleges in the LACCD have been acknowledged as leaders in the state in terms of developing matriculation models that work. Project ASSET, which we developed with American College Testing to provide a systematic program of assessment, orientation and course placement, is serving as the model for approximately 200 community college districts throughout the country.

In addition, Project ASSIST, developed by Los Angeles Harbor College and UC Irvine, now offers a microcomputer transfer information system with tremendous benefits in counseling, as well as articulation.

The past year has also seen extensive intersegmental activities to increase cooperation and communication between our colleges and staff from the University of California and California State University systems engaged in counseling, school relations, financial aid, and other related activities.

And we just won the prestigious 1985 "Keeping America Working" award from the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, presented for our model, innovative, cooperative programs with business and industry to train workers in their local communities. The award was based on a proposal developed by the Office of Occupational and Technical Education in cooperation with L.A. Southwest, East Los Angeles, and Los Angeles Valley colleges.

Last spring, we received the largest job training grant ever awarded by the State of California to a community college system. That $5 million Employment Training Panel grant came on the heels of a previous $4 million grant to fund programs we developed with major employers in high-tech fields.

We have been working with an aerospace consortium that includes such companies as Lockheed, McDonnell Douglas, Rockwell International and General Dynamics to place a $200,000 computer numerical control machining laboratory in a mobile trailer that is moved from company site to company site. This unit has proven to be so successful that a second mobile lab is being outfitted — with an additional $700,000 in support from the Employment Training Panel.

It would be nice if I could stand before you and devote my entire speech to examples of excellence in the District. And indeed, I could have extended these examples indefinitely, because there are, throughout the District, outstanding examples of good teaching, good administration, good staff work, good trusteeship, and good community support.

PERIOD OF TURMOIL

However, as we all know, community colleges in the State of California have been going through a period of unprecedented turmoil. We have, in the past few years, been faced with a number of problems, and in the process, we have been forced to change. These changes are evident in our curriculum, in our student body, in our relations with the community, and in the very way we view ourselves and our colleges.

The new realities of community college life are known to us all: a restricted educational mission, reduced funding and reduced numbers of students. It is significant that these realities be placed in that order, because there is a cause and effect relationship.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the community college mandate was broad and far-reaching. That mandate was to educate anyone who could profit from an educational program. We delivered on that mandate, and growth was explosive —from 1970 to 1975 total enrollment in California community colleges doubled.

In 1975, however, the broad mandate started to be questioned. State authorities had discovered that the public demand for educational services was infinite, or at least too great to satisfy. California, they began to argue, was overinvesting in education. It was necessary to cut back. They did so—first with a 5 percent enrollment cap, and then with finance mechanisms which directly and indirectly limited the ability of community colleges to provide educational programs as freely as they had in the past.

The state used the finance mechanism to reduce college offerings at first through the control of the curriculum. You

will recall the credit/noncredit issue and the Course Classification System and its $30 million "hit list" of avocational and recreational courses. In later years, the state affected our programs directly through reduced levels of funding and the institution of tuition. In the words of Patrick Callan, director of the California Postsecondary Education Commission,

> ". . . the mission of the colleges has been defined by exclusion — what the state won't fund . . . rather than by any statement of statewide interests and priorities."

In effect, the state has said "cut," and it has been left to us to determine which part of our anatomy we would lop off.

But I would submit that the impact on our mission and our programs was less pernicious than the budgetary impact on our enrollment. I have noted before the process of the downward spiral, in which reduced funding leads to fewer classes and services, which leads to fewer students, which leads again to reduced funding, and so on.

Allow me to cite just the most telling figures to describe how that process worked. In the three year period from 1981-82 to 1983-84, District operating revenues fell 14 percent from $202 million to $174 million. Moreover, at the beginning of 1983-84, the District had to absorb a $12 million reduction in state funding when the governor reduced community college funding $108 million. Although these funds were later released, they were not available in time to support the 1983-84 instructional program.

This lack of financial support led to severe reductions in our ability to offer the kind of full, balanced program we would have liked. The result was a 12 percent decline in enrollment in 1983-84. In 1984-85, the fiscal effect of that enrollment loss, combined with a first ever experience with tuition, led to a further enrollment decline. The result was that in 1984-85, even though there was an 8 percent increase in state funding for community colleges, the District's budget increased only 3 percent as a result of the enrollment losses.

Our current enrollments for 1984-85 are 101,000 students which is a 26 percent decrease

from our peak 1981 enrollment of 137,500. When in 1986-87 we are funded according to our actual enrollments, we will receive funding based on our enrollments in 1985-86. And while I believe that we may have bottomed out and will begin to increase our enrollments next year, I do not believe that they will increase appreciably.

The reality, then, is that we have one more year of grace. The question is, "What must we do to meet the reality we will face in 1986-87?

There are two general approaches the District could take. We could down-size our operations sufficiently to live with whatever revenue the state will allot to a District of 100,000—or fewer--students. I do not want to describe to you how drastic such action would have to be. The second alternative is to increase our enrollments enough to pay for our current level of operations. This alternative is clearly the most desirable. Unfortunately, it is not realistic to believe that we can effect such a recovery very rapidly.

I submit that we will have to do a combination of both; that is, we will have to continue the process of organizational devolution, as carefully and as responsibly as we have in the past, and we will also have to do all that we can to increase our enrollments. Neither of these efforts will be successful unless we are able to harness what some have called "the power of collective purpose," and only if we direct that collective purpose to improving the quality of our colleges.

I imagine that you might be saying, "Oh yes, that old cliche, 'quality.'" Well, the truth is, "Quality" and "Excellence" sell. Those words get books published and dissertations accepted. They have launched a thousand speeches on staff development days. But they are popular words because that is what students want.

Unfortunately, quality and excellence are elusive. When Peters and Waterman went in search of excellence, they found it in a number of companies, but when Business Week visited a few of those companies a few years later, it was gone. Excellence is hard to judge, and it's a fleeting thing sometimes, but as I pointed out earlier, I believe we have outstanding examples of it in our own District.

What I am pointing out to you now is my belief that we must concentrate on the quality and excellence of our institutions rather than on enrollment. Society around us is changing, and the demands of the 1980s are different from the demands of the 1960s and 70s. We in the community colleges are by definition the closest of all higher education to the community, and we are, therefore, the first affected by changes in the public mood. Although it means that we absorb the full impact of social, political, and economic change, it is also our source of strength.

What then is the new environment? What does society want from community colleges? If we are not pleasing to the representatives of the public in our present form, what must we become? If we have a year of change ahead, what should the values and objectives of the new community colleges be?

AREAS OF CHANGE

I believe that the changes we must make in our colleges relate to three areas in which society is changing.

First, we must become more competitive. American society in the 1950s believed it was number one in the world. In the 1960s and 70s values changed—the spirit of competition sagged. The U.S. feared it was becoming second to Japan and could not compete with their productive capacity. U.S. carmakers gave up.

The 1980s has brought the swing of the pendulum back to the competitive spirit. The U.S. is attempting to reassert itself in world markets and world politics, and is attempting to compete and be number one.

The new college must be competitive. The newspapers this week have carried articles describing the intense competition for students going on throughout the nation. The combination of decreased public funding and a smaller number of traditional college-age students is forcing colleges into a competitive environment. Colleges all over the country are realizing that they are in a marketplace, and just like businesses, they are developing marketing plans to sell their product to students.

The estimated cost of marketing is now said to be about $150 per student.

In the new college it will be the recognized interest of every member of the college community, administration, faculty and staff, to make their institution competitive. An estimated 10 percent of the 3,000 colleges and universities across the nation will close their doors by the turn of the century. The cold reality is that no students means no salaries, no contracts, no jobs, and no college.

To be competitive, the new college will have to do a thorough review of its curriculum. I would suggest to you that perhaps there needs to be a sunset provision on the curriculum. The vigorous lifetime of a course outline, a program, or a curriculum is not a lifetime. At today's rate of change, it may be only four or five years. The new college should institute a controlled process of review which would examine courses and programs before that fifth year passed.

As we look at our own curriculum and at the standards we set for our associate degree, we must also look outside our institutions to the other segments of higher education. For example, the recent study of the Baccalaureat Degree conducted by the Association of American Colleges should be of interest to us as members of the higher education community. We should comment on and show concern for the four-year college degrees in the same way that four-year institutions comment on the Associate Degree, and we should do what we can to participate in the current dialogue. I believe that we are needed in that dialogue, and that we have a contribution to make to it.

The second area in which society is changing is in the revival of the work ethic. Social scientists tell us that during the 1960s and 70s, students had a certain resistance to the work ethic, but that students of the 1980s are more devoted to it and know that they have to go to work and produce. We know that they are more attracted to programs that prepare them for business and industry. Students, it is said, have gone from active to passive to earnest.

The greatest challenge for the new college will be to find

out the future of its community and to plan programs to prepare students for the jobs that are available.

The new college will have to devote more attention to preparation of our entering students. We must look, as we have this morning, at the programs of primary and secondary education and their relation to us. We may also need to determine whether new organizational structures are needed within our colleges to bring the competencies of entering students up to collegiate standards before they enter college level courses.

Another aspect of this change in work habits is the increased attention which must be given to time on task. As educators, we know the theory in relation to our students. More time on task results in better performance, and the new college must ensure that students get it.

I believe that we can apply the same principle to all college employees. As I indicated to the administrators at their recent staff development retreat, we must devote more attention to the way we do our work.

The same can be said of faculty. I believe that the Commission for the Advancement of Teaching deserves the participation and support of everyone in its effort to examine the teaching function and in its search for ways to improve it.

Our business is teaching, and we need to spend more time thinking about what we do and how we do it. That is, of course, the purpose of the flexible calendar and our activities of the past three days.

According to the AAC study of the B.A. degree mentioned earlier, faculty offer the strongest force for educational improvement. Of all the factors contributing to sustaining the momentum of excellence in education, it said that teaching matters most. The Report called for faculty members to *initiate* dialogue on their campuses, increasing the level and frequency of discussion about teaching as a profession—and our responsibility to our students.

PROFESSIONALISM

By the way, I believe this Colloquium and our Commission for the Advancement of Teaching are examples of the kind of positive influence that is exerted by such interaction.

I believe that the professionalism of community college faculty is a critical issue. An emerging literature on the subject suggests that community college faculty are becoming detached from their disciplines — they tend not to be affiliated with disciplinary organizations, they attend fewer discipline conferences, read fewer professional journals than other segments of the professoriat in higher education.

There are two sides to the professionalism of a community college instructor—teaching skill and subject matter expertise. Faculty must protect their professionalism on both fronts by maintaining their academic connections, their journal subscriptions, and their research interests. But they need help from the District, the universities, and the state. The Los Angeles District last fall recommended that the Board of Governors of California Community Colleges place professional growth of faculty on its agenda. The Los Angeles District has itself sponsored a bill in the legislature for a fund of $5 million to be allocated for professional growth funds for community college faculty.

The money could be used for strengthening linkages between two- and four-year institutions, for upgrading skills, retraining, or other related activities.

Community college faculty have the most difficult role in higher education. They must be nurturers, advisors and role models for their students, and they must also transmit the same amount and quality of information as their colleagues at UC and CSU. The new college must help them to do the job.

Companies have learned that in addition to the professional needs of their employees, they have to pay more attention to their social and personal needs. The new college will have as one of its central values the personal and professional growth of its employees, and the quality of their work environment.

It is in the interest of all segments of the college community that their institutions are positive, refreshing environments in which teaching and learning can take place, and the new college must be that kind of environment. It should also be remembered that the quality of every service is important to the educational environment. Good libraries, good child development centers, good counseling and good staff support are integral parts of a quality program, and we must ensure that all elements of the college community are vital and functioning if the total college hopes to be competitive.

Finally, I want to say something about technology. The 1960s and 70s witnessed a rejection of science and technology—they were the carrier of death and the instruments of war. In the 1980s technophobia has given over to technophilia. Time Magazine's selection of a computer as man-of-the-year recognized the shift in attitudes on technology. It is with us to stay and it is changing our lives and the society around us.

I say "around us" because colleges and universities, the institutions which developed the technology, are the last to adopt it. The new college must put the machines to work in the classrooms, the libraries, and offices. They have the potential for improving our communication, our information base, and our work lives, and we must learn to use them wisely, but freely.

If I may, I want to leave the faculty a charge, which I will illustrate with a story. When Dwight Eisenhower was President of Columbia, he sent a memo to the faculty saying, "The University expects more of the faculty." The next day he received a reply: "Sir, the faculty *is* the University."

Perhaps we in the Los Angeles Community College District are more egalitarian than that particular faculty member and would accept the proposition that all of us, administrators, faculty, and staff, are the college. But only you, the faculty, have the power to shake up the curriculum and mold it into the kind of instrument the new college will

need. Only you can provide the kind of mentorship which will attract and hold students. It is you who must automate the courses and learning materials if it is to be done.

In the coming year we will need tremendous patience and understanding in the development of the new college. I believe that we have in the Commission a model of the kind of constructive, cooperative effort we will need if we are to solve our problems. I believe that in our Board of Trustees we have the kind of leadership which can provide the environment for support of constructive change.

And finally, I believe that when the state authorities and the community at large become convinced that what we are doing is right, they will act to resolve our financial problems.

There is no question in my mind that without the faculty, without your active leadership and support, the new college will not come into being. I invite you to join with me in making it happen.

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